

HAHN RANCH CONSERVATION EASEMENT

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A proposal by the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks
April 13, 1998

- ▶ ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
- ▶ MANAGEMENT PLAN
- ▶ SOCIO-ECONOMIC ASSESSMENT



Comment period on this proposal is from April 13, 1998 to May 13, 1998. Please submit comments to: Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks, c/o Tom Carlsen, P.O. Box 998, Townsend, MT 59644.

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HAHN RANCH

CONSERVATION EASEMENT

A proposal by Montana, Fish, Wildlife and Parks

Included in This Document:

- o Draft Environmental Assessment**
- o Draft Management Plan**
- o Socio-Economic Assessment**

Comment period on this proposal is from April 13, 1998 until May 13, 1998. Submit Comments to:

**Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks
c/o Tom Carlsen
Hahn Easement
P.O. Box 998
Townsend, MT 59644**

Public Hearing: May 7, 1998 at 7 p.m., Community Room, Broadwater School and Community Library, Townsend, MT.

For additional information contact:

**Joel Peterson, Region 3 Wildlife Manager, (406) 994-6936
Michael Korn, Helena Area Coordinator, (406)444-4720**

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**Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
Wildlife Division**

Draft Environmental Assessment

HAHN RANCH CONSERVATION EASEMENT

I. INTRODUCTION

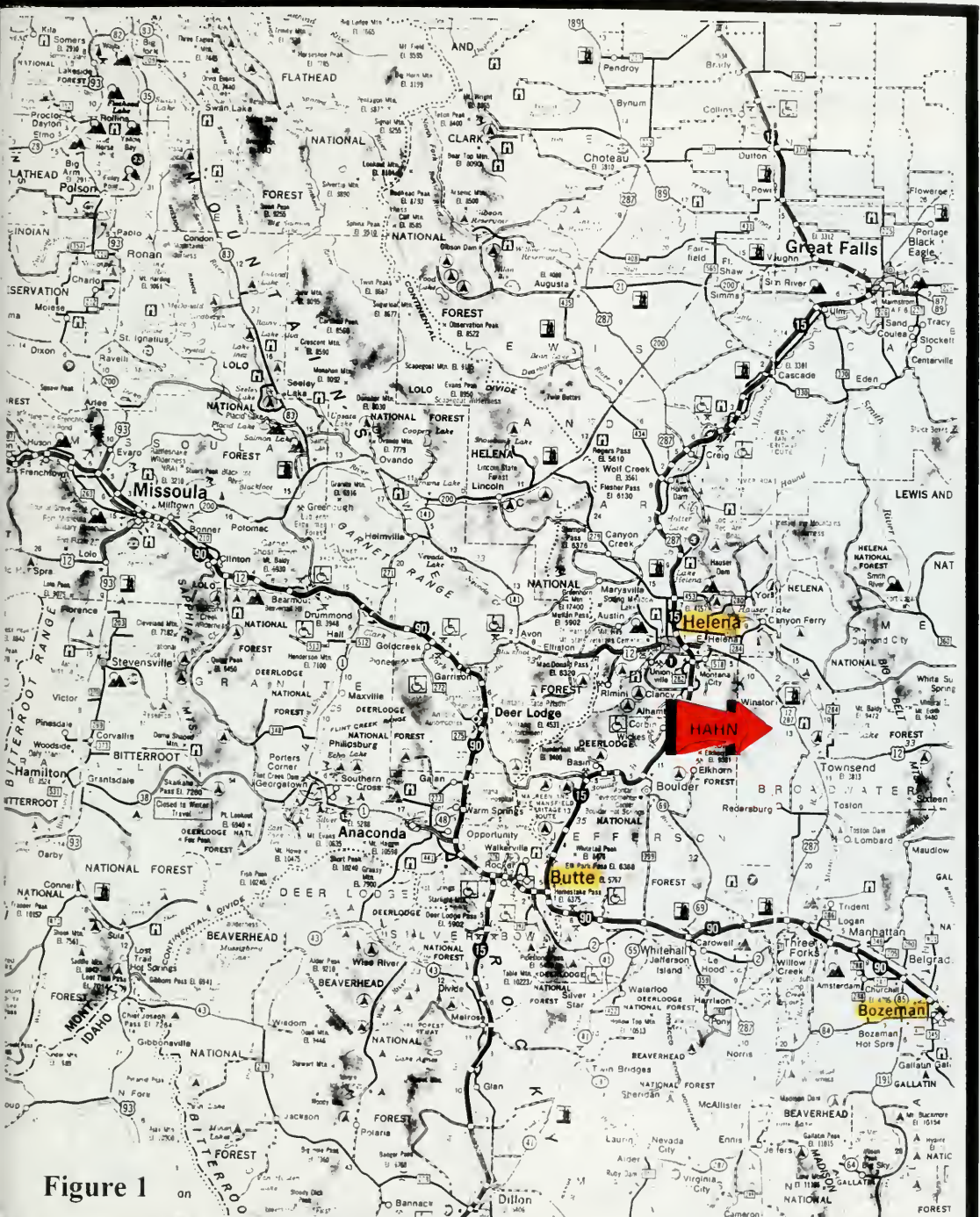
The state of Montana recognizes that certain native plant communities constituting wildlife habitat are worthy of perpetual conservation. These communities include riparian, sagebrush-grassland, montane forest, and intermountain grassland. Property owned by the Hahn Ranch includes such habitats and The Department has determined that it warrants perpetual conservation consideration. A conservation easement was offered to Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (MFWP) by the Hahn Ranch and an agreement has been reached on the terms of this easement. The terms of the proposed conservation easement reflect the Hahns' desire to maintain and protect their ranching lifestyle and agricultural production operation while enhancing wildlife habitats. It is proposed that a permanent conservation easement be purchased by MFWP from the Hahn Ranch. The proposed easement will keep the property in private ownership and operation while preserving important wildlife habitats and perpetuating public recreational opportunities.

II. AUTHORITY AND DIRECTION

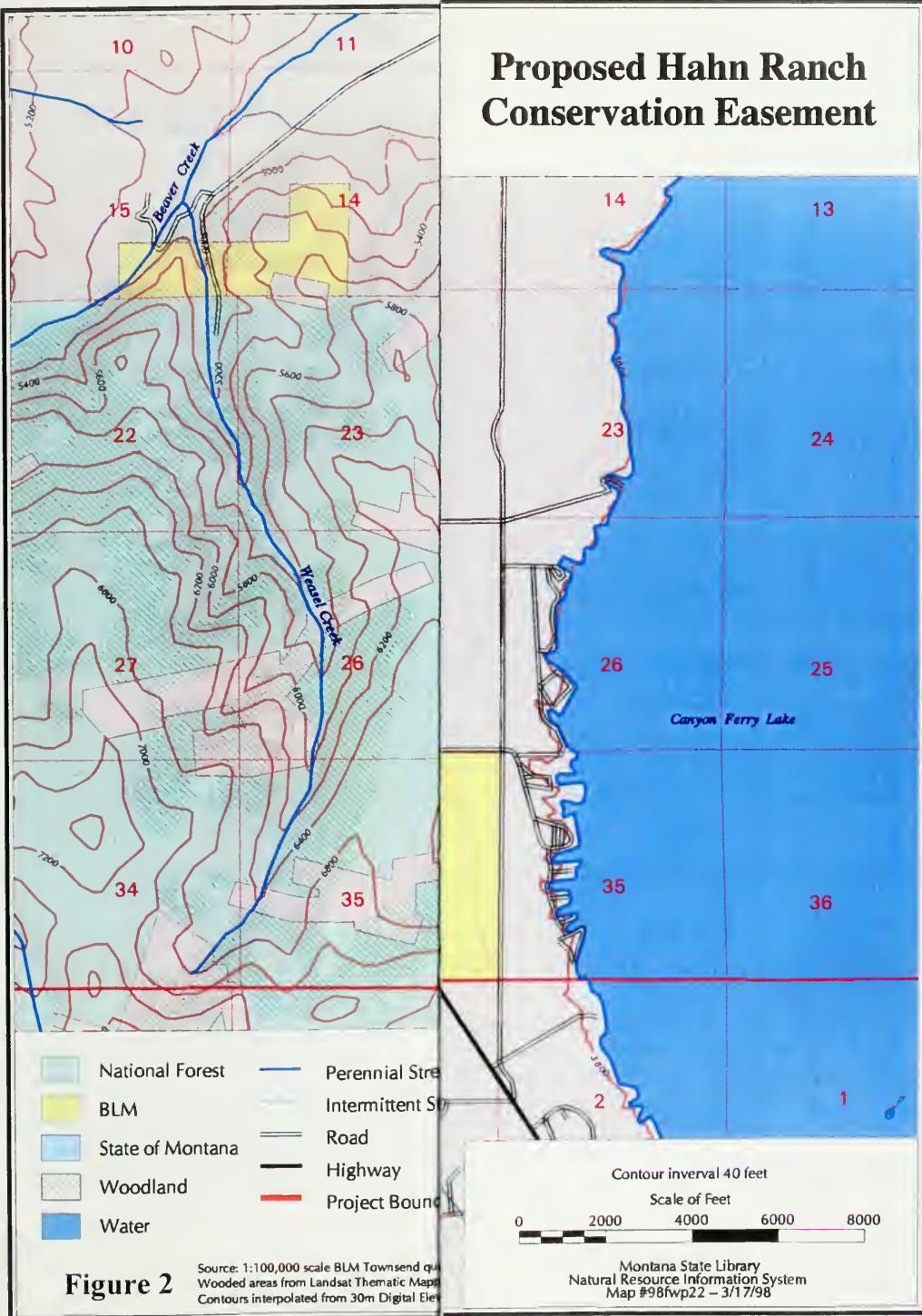
MFWP has the authority under law (87-1-201) to protect, enhance and regulate the use of Montana's fish and wildlife resources for public benefit now and in the future. In 1987, the Montana Legislature passed HB 526 which earmarked hunting license revenues to secure wildlife habitat through lease, conservation easement, or fee title acquisition (87-1-241 and 242). This is now referred to as the Habitat Montana Program. As with other MFWP real property proposals, the Fish, Wildlife and Parks Commission and the State Land Board must approve this conservation easement proposal. This Environmental Assessment is part of the decision making process as directed by the Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA).

III. LOCATION OF THE PROJECT

The Hahn property is located approximately 15 air miles southeast of Helena along the east side of the Elkhorn Mountains (Figure 1). The property consists of 1,685 acres and is bounded on the west by U.S. Forest Service land, on the east by Bureau of Land Management (BLM) land, and includes portions of the Whitehorse, Kimber, and Kelly drainages (Figure 2). All of the land involved is within deer/elk/lion hunting district (HD) 380. The property is accessible from Highway 287 and overlooks Canyon Ferry Reservoir with the Big Belt Mountains to the east.



Proposed Hahn Ranch Conservation Easement



Proposed Hahn Ranch Conservation Easement

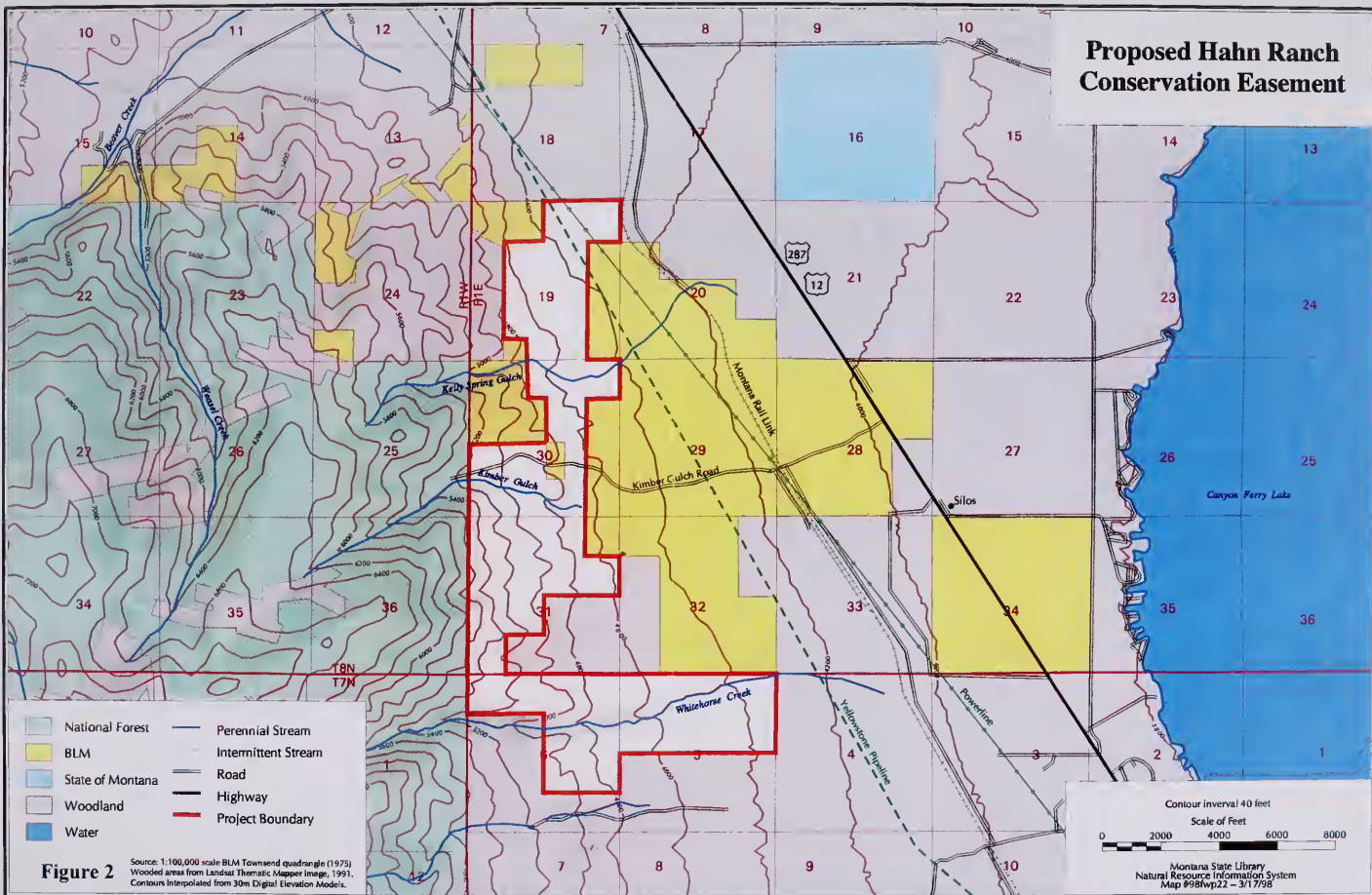


Figure 2

Source: 1:100,000 scale BLM Township quadrangle (1975)
 Wooded area from Landsat Thematic Mapper image, 1991.
 Contours interpolated from 30m Digital Elevation Models.

Montana State Library
 Natural Resource Information System
 Map Krišw22 - 3/17/98

IV. PURPOSE AND NEED

An important feature of this action is to preserve the integrity of native habitats while, at the same time, maintaining agricultural land uses and ownership. Another purpose is to maintain public hunting access to the private land and to adjacent Forest Service land. The Hahn Ranch has historically allowed hunter access to and through their property. They provide unlimited public access on the Kimber Gulch road to Forest Service land adjacent to their boundaries. In addition, this property provides a critical link between a large block of BLM land and the Forest Service property on the east slope of the Elkhorns. Placement of a conservation easement on this property would assure that this land stays in a ranching operation, conserves wildlife habitat, and continues to provide an important public access point to a large block of Forest Service land popular for hunting.

Big game species which would benefit most from preservation of habitats on this property include elk, mule deer, and antelope. The Hahn Ranch, in combination with adjacent public and private lands, provides winter range for 400-500 elk annually. This includes the Kimber Gulch Herd and a portion of the North Crow Herd which winters south of Whitehorse Creek. These elk rely heavily on the Hahn Ranch and adjacent public lands during normal to extreme winter conditions. Some elk also use the area for spring calving. A few whitetail deer are associated with the riparian areas. Mule deer are common on the property, which provides limited winter habitat for approximately 50 deer. The property also includes yearlong antelope habitat. A herd of 50-100 antelope are associated with the property. Recently transplanted bighorn sheep utilize this property and adjacent Forest Service land seasonally. Upland game birds include blue grouse, possibly some sharp-tailed grouse, and Hungarian partridge.

Vegetation communities occurring on the property provide habitat for a variety of other game and non-game wildlife species. These include species associated with sagebrush and juniper shrublands, grasslands, riparian corridors, and montane forest-grassland ecotones. The species list which follows contains a comprehensive list of wildlife species which would benefit from preserving current uses of this property (Appendix A).

Grazing allotments consisting of approximately 1,600 acres of BLM and 1,000 acres of Forest Service land are tied to this property. Vegetative condition on this public land would be enhanced by the rest-rotation grazing system that has been designed for this project in cooperation with Forest Service and the BLM (see Management Plan, Attachment A).

Subdivision development is occurring in the immediate vicinity of this property, primarily within a mile of Highway 287. There are, however, plans for further subdivision on land adjacent to the Hahn Ranch including some lower foothills and flats between Indian and Whitehorse Creeks. The lower portion of the Hahn Ranch lends itself to similar residential development which would likely occur in the future without a conservation easement. Recently, there has been a trend in Montana toward the sale of large ranches for private, exclusive recreational use. When these sales occur, public recreational opportunities are often eliminated. The proposed easement would provide public hunting opportunities on the Hahn ranch in perpetuity.

IV. PURPOSE AND NEED

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V. DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED ACTION

The proposed action is for MFWP to acquire and monitor a permanent conservation easement on approximately 1,685 acres of the Hahn Ranch (Figure 2). The total purchase price for the proposed easement is \$250,000. An additional \$6,875 will be required for range improvements on the Hahn Ranch to implement the grazing system. Funds for the acquisition and range improvements will come from the Habitat Montana Program.

The specific terms of the easement in their entirety are contained in a separate legal document, the "Deed of Conservation Easement." This document lists MFWP's and landowners' rights under the terms of the easement as well as restrictions on landowner activities. The rights of both parties and restrictions on landowner activities were negotiated and agreed to by MFWP and the landowners. The intent of these rights and restrictions is to preserve important wildlife habitats in perpetuity while maintaining the agricultural, residential, and public recreational values which occur on the land.

To summarize the terms of the easement, MFWP's rights include the right to:

- (1) identify, preserve and enhance specific habitats;
- (2) monitor and enforce restrictions ;
- (3) prevent activities inconsistent with easement ;
- (4) ensure public access for the purpose of recreational hunting. Hunting access for all sex and age classes of game animals and game birds during all established seasons will be maintained for a minimum of 400 hunter days. Public access will be allowed on the Kimber Gulch road and 2 parking lots may be established for use by the public. Motorized vehicle use will be limited to the Kimber Gulch road.

The Landowners retain all of the rights in the property that are not specifically restricted and that are not inconsistent with the conservation purposes of the proposed easement, including the right to:

- (1) pasture and graze livestock in accordance with the Grazing Plan ;
- (2) regulate the public use of land, subject to the public's access described above;
- (3) develop and maintain water resources;
- (4) construct, remove, repair or replace fences and roads providing that such improvements do not have a material impact on wildlife or wildlife habitat;
- (5) construct two dwellings of limited size in designated building areas. The lot sizes for each of the residences may not exceed 5 acres and no permanent structures may be built within 150 feet of Whitehorse Creek.

The proposed easement will restrict uses that are inconsistent with the conservation purposes of the easement including the following uses of the property:

- (1) control or manipulation of sagebrush;
- (2) legal or de facto subdivision;
- (3) commercial logging or thinning;
- (4) cultivation or farming except 160 acres for the sole purpose of grazing;
- (5) renting or leasing access to the land for hunting;

- (6) livestock grazing except according to a grazing plan;
- (7) use of agrichemicals is restricted to the minimum amount necessary to control noxious weeds. Aerial application of agrichemicals is prohibited without written approval of MFWP except as approved by the State of Montana;
- (8) use of motor vehicles and agricultural equipment except in a manner having minimal impact on vegetation and natural habitats;
- (9) installation of utility structures without prior MFWP approval ;
- (10) mineral exploration, development and extraction by surface mining methods or below the surface methods that would significantly impair conservation values;
- (11) construction of any permanent structure except as described above;
- (12) establishment or maintenance of any commercial feedlot;
- (13) the establishment or operation of a game farm, game bird farm, shooting preserve, fur farm, menagerie or zoo;
- (14) commercial or industrial use except traditional agricultural uses;
- (15) dumping or disposal of wastes, refuse, and debris;

VI. DESCRIPTION OF REASONABLE ALTERNATIVES TO THE PROPOSED ACTION

The Hahn Ranch wants to maintain their ranch as a family operated agricultural operation. They did not express an interest in a sale of fee title or a long term lease. Since conservation easements are also MFWP's preferred option, the only other alternative in this EA is the "No Action Alternative".

1. No Action Alternative

Under the "No Action Alternative" the Hahn Ranch would continue to be managed as in the past. There would be no guarantee of the preservation of current habitat values found on the property. Without the proposed easement an important public access point to Forest Service land could be lost along with a loss in public hunting opportunities. In addition, the ranch would remain vulnerable to rural subdivision, livestock grazing practices detrimental to the range resource and the problems associated with these land use practices.

VII. EVALUATION OF IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

1. Land Resources

Impact of Proposed Action: No negative impact would occur as a result of this proposal. The terms of the proposed easement are structured to prevent adverse impacts on soils and vegetation. A grazing plan has been developed and will be implemented that will enhance soil maintenance (Management Plan, Attachment A). The harvest of timber is prohibited except for firewood gathering for personal use.

Subdivision and development of the land is restricted, as is additional cultivation. The proposed easement will insure that the land resources are maintained.

No Action Alternative: This alternative would allow for potential disturbance of soils from more intense agricultural practices, mining and residential development.

2. Air Resources

Impact of Proposed Action: There would be no impact.

No Action Alternative: There would be no immediate impact. However, if land were to be subdivided, increased human activity in the area could potentially degrade the current air quality.

3. Water Resources

Impact of Proposed Action: There would be no impact in perpetuity over what is currently associated with a working livestock operation. Current agricultural uses on the property have proven to be generally compatible with maintenance of water quality.

No Action Alternative: There would be no immediate impact. However, there would be no assurances that over time the property wouldn't change from primarily agricultural to some other use, with no conservation protection.

4. Vegetation Resources

Impact of Proposed Action: This action would result in a positive impact. The terms of the easement protect the quantity, quality and character of the native plant communities found on the property. The prescribed grazing program will enhance and maintain the vigor and productivity of vegetation on both the Hahn Ranch property and the associated federal grazing allotments. The proposed action also ensures the land's primary use in the future will be agriculture which depends on maintaining a productive vegetative resource. Noxious weed management will continue to be an important component of a successful ranch operation. No timber harvest will assure the continued existence of conifer cover.

No Action Alternative: There would be no immediate impact. If the land use were to change from agriculture to subdivision or some other use there would be no conservation measures in place to maintain the productivity of the land. Future impacts to native vegetation and overall productivity of the land could be significant. In addition, there would be no long term protection of existing native plant communities. Noxious weeds would likely increase with subdivision and coordination of weed control would become more difficult. Timber harvest could result in soil erosion, loss of thermal and conifer cover.

5. Fish/Wildlife Resources

Impact of Proposed Action: This action will benefit a variety of wildlife. The terms of the easement conserve the land as agricultural and open space to provide for winter range as well as year-round habitat for many of Montana's native wildlife species. Large mammals such as elk, mule deer, and antelope require large blocks of unsubdivided open space. Large mammals and agriculture can coexist well together as witnessed in Montana today. Conserving native plant communities is important for most of Montana's indigenous wildlife species. Implementation of a rest-rotation grazing system, incorporating private and public lands, will ensure adequate quantity and quality of forage and cover for a variety of wildlife species. No adverse effects are expected on the diversity or abundance of game species, nongame species or unique, rare, threatened or endangered species. There would be no barriers erected which would limit wildlife migration or daily movements. There would be no introduction of non-native species into the area.

No Action Alternative: No immediate impact would occur. However, without long term conservation measures, the area is likely to become more developed. As this occurs, open space would diminish over time resulting in significant long term effects to most species of wildlife. There would be no provisions preventing activities such as game farming on the property, as well as the construction of fences or other barriers that could inhibit wildlife movement. Residential development of this property would significantly reduce the big game winter range carrying capacity.

6. Adjacent Land

Impact of Proposed Action: No negative impact is expected. Public access to the Forest Service boundary would be assured with this easement. In addition, an undeveloped link would be maintained between Forest Service and BLM land.

No Action Alternative: There would be no immediate impact. However, a change in management or ownership could result in a loss of public access along the Kimber Gulch road. This in turn would jeopardize public hunting and other recreational opportunities in this area.

VIII. EVALUATION OF IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

1. Noise/Electrical Effects

Impact of Proposed Action: No impact would occur over existing conditions.

No Action Alternative: There would be no immediate impact.

2. Land Use

Impact of Proposed Action: There would be no impact with the productivity or profitability of the ranch nor conflicts with existing land uses in the area. Game damage problems are not expected because the proposed action is attempting to maintain current wildlife numbers (specifically elk), recreational opportunities, and habitat quality.

No Action Alternative: No immediate impact would occur. However, with changes in future landownership and land use habitat quality, current wildlife numbers and recreational opportunity will likely be diminished.

3. Risk/Health Hazards

Impact of Proposed Action: No impact would occur.

No Action Alternative: No impact would occur.

4. Community Impacts

Impact of Proposed Action: There would be no anticipated negative impacts to the community. This action would prevent residential development. The scenic values and open character of this property would be maintained and enjoyed by the community in perpetuity. This issue is also addressed in the attached Socio-Economic Assessment.

No Action Alternative: No immediate impact would occur. However, hunting access and public access along the Kimber Gulch road could be restricted in the future negatively affecting traditional recreational opportunities in the area.

5. Public Services/Taxes/Utilities

Impact of Proposed Action: There would be no effect on local or state tax bases or revenues, no alterations of existing utility systems nor tax bases of revenues, nor increased uses of energy sources. As an agricultural property, the land would continue to be taxed as it has before. This issue is also addressed in the attached Socio-Economic Assessment.

No Action Alternative: No immediate impact would occur. Subdivision and development would increase demand for government services such as schools, fire and police protection, road maintenance and residential planning.

6. Aesthetics/Recreation

Impact of Proposed Action: There would be no impact. The easement would maintain in perpetuity the quality and quantity of recreational opportunities and scenic vistas and would not affect the character of the neighborhood. This issue is also addressed in the attached Socio-Economic Assessment.

No Action Alternative: No immediate impact would occur, however there would be no guarantee of continued public access to the land or across the land for recreational purposes. Should subdivision and/or other development occur it would reduce the aesthetic and recreational quality of the area. Future landowners may not be as generous with recreational access as have the Hahns.

7. Cultural/Historic Resources

Impact of Proposed Action: There would be no impact.

No Action Alternative: There would be no anticipated impact.

8. Socio-Economic Assessment

Please refer to the attached Socio-Economic Assessment for additional analysis of impacts on the human environment.

IX. SUMMARY EVALUATION OF SIGNIFICANCE

The proposed action should have no negative cumulative effect. However, when considered on a larger scale, this action poses a substantial positive cumulative effect on wildlife, agriculture, and open space. Whereas this easement is proposed to protect privately-owned wildlife habitat, this action will create a buffer for adjacent blocks of public lands, benefitting a significantly larger amount of habitat in perpetuity. In so doing, the ranch will remain in private ownership, continue to contribute to agricultural production and thus contribute to the local economy.

The “No Action” alternative would not preserve the diversity of wildlife habitats in perpetuity. Without the income from the proposed conservation easement, the Hahns might consider other income options including either selling the ranch or subdividing parts of it. Possible future subdivisions or other actions prohibited under the terms of the Proposed Action, such as game farming, could directly replace wildlife habitat. An important undeveloped winter range for elk and mule deer may be lost, and important public access to private land, public lands and school trust lands would likely be lost.

X. EVALUATION OF NEED FOR AN EIS

Based on the above assessment, which has not identified any significant negative impacts from the proposed action, an EIS is not required and an E.A. is the appropriate level of review. The overall impact from the successful completion of the proposed action would provide substantial long term benefits to both the physical and human environment.

XI. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Public comment on this environmental assessment will be accepted from April 13, 1998 to 5:00 p.m. May 13, 1998. A public meeting on the proposal will be held at 7.00 p.m. at the Community Room, Broadwater School and Community Library, Townsend, MT on May 7, 1998 to solicit additional public comments. The finalized document and a decision notice will be released to the public by May 22, 1998. The decision notice will be presented to the Fish, Wildlife & Parks Commission for review at its June 5, 1998 meeting. If approved, the proposal will be presented to the Board of Land Commissioners on June 15, 1998.

COMMENTS

Comments on this environmental assessment should be sent to:

**Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks
c/o Tom Carlsen
Hahn Easement
P.O. Box 998
Townsend, MT 59644**

XII. NAME, TITLE AND PHONE NUMBER OF PERSONS RESPONSIBLE FOR PREPARING THE E.A.

Bret Stansberry, Wildlife Technician, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks, Townsend, MT, 266-3367

Tom Carlsen, Wildlife Biologist, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks, Townsend, MT, 266-3367

XIII. PERSONS PROVIDING ASSISTANCE INPUT AND/OR REVIEW DURING PREPARATION OF THE E.A.

Stephen Lewis, Regional Supervisor, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, 1400 South 19th, Bozeman, MT 59715; phone (406)994-4042.

Steve Knapp, Habitat Bureau Chief, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, 1420 E Sixth Ave., Helena, Mt 59620; phone (406)444-2612.

Karen Hillstrom, Lands Staff, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, 1420 E Sixth Ave., Helena, MT 59620; phone (406)444-3974.

Michael Korn, Helena Area Coordinator, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, 930 Custer Ave. W., Helena, MT 59620; phone (406)444-4720.

Curt Larsen, Legal Counsel, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, 1420 E Sixth Ave., Helena, MT 59620; phone (406)444-4047.

Joel Peterson, Region 3 Wildlife Manager, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, 1400 South 19th, Bozeman, MT 59715; phone (406)994-6936.

Mike Frisina, Range Coordinator, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, 1330 W. Gold, Butte, MT 59701-2112; phone (406)782-2060.

Rob Brooks, Bio-Economist, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, RTSB MFWP Bldg MSU Campus, Bozeman, MT 59715; phone (406)994-6364.

Rich Clough, Field Services Administrator, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, 1420 E. 6th Ave, Helena, MT 59620; phone (406)444-2602.

USDA Forest Service, Townsend Ranger District, 415 South Front, Townsend, MT 59644; phone (406)266-3425.

USDI Bureau of Land Management, Butte District, Headwaters Resource Area, P.O. Box 3388, 106 North Parkmont, Butte, MT 59702; phone (406)494-5059.

APPENDIX A

The species listed below are thought to have the potential to occur on the Hahn Ranch. This list is partially derived from a species list from Deerlodge National Forest and adapted for habitats occurring on the Hahn property.

Table 1. ANIMAL SPECIES LIST - HAHN RANCH CONSERVATION EASEMENT

(Abundance classes are: C=Common, O=Occasional, R=Rare. Observance is Y for observed, N for not observed but assumed present based on habitat and local experience, U for Unknown.

SCIENTIFIC NAME	COMMON NAME	ABUNDANCE	OBSERVED
MAMMALS			
<i>Alces alces</i>	Moose	O	Y
<i>Antilocapra americana</i>	Pronghorn	C	Y
<i>Canis latrans</i>	Coyote	C	Y
<i>Cervus elaphus</i>	Elk	C	Y
<i>Erethizon dorsatum</i>	Common Porcupine	C	Y
<i>Felis concolor</i>	Mountain Lion	O	Y
<i>Lasiurus cinereus</i>	Hoary Bat	U	N
<i>Lepus townsendii</i>	White-tailed Jack Rabbit	O	N
<i>Lynx rufus</i>	Bobcat	O	N
<i>Marmota flaviventris</i>	Yellow-bellied Marmot	O	N
<i>Mephitis mephitis</i>	Striped skunk	U	N
<i>Microtus pennsylvanicus</i>	Meadow Vole	C	N
<i>Mus musculus</i>	House Mouse	C	N
<i>Mustela erminea</i>	Ermine	U	N
<i>Mustela frenata</i>	Long-tailed Weasel	U	N
<i>Mustela vison</i>	Mink	U	N
<i>Myotis lucifungus</i>	Little Brown Myotis	C	N
<i>Neotoma cinerea</i>	Bushy-tailed Woodrat	C	N
<i>Odocoileus hemionus</i>	Mule deer	C	Y
<i>Odocoileus virginianus</i>	White-tailed deer	C	Y
<i>Peromyscus maniculatus</i>	Deer Mouse	C	N
<i>Sylvilagus nuttallii</i>	Mountain Cottontail	O	Y
<i>Sorex cinereus</i>	Masked Shrew	U	N
<i>Spermophilus richardsonii</i>	Richardson's Ground Squirrel	U	N
<i>Tamias amoenus</i>	Yellow-pine Chipmunk	C	Y
<i>Tamiasciurus hudsonicus</i>	Red Squirrel	C	Y
<i>Taxidea taxus</i>	American Badger	O	Y
<i>Thomomys talpoides</i>	Northern Pocket Gopher	C	Y
<i>Ursus americanus</i>	Black Bear	C	Y
<i>Vulpes vulpes</i>	Red Fox	O	N
BIRDS			
<i>Accipiter cooperii</i>	Cooper's Hawk	O	N
<i>Accipiter gentilis</i>	Northern Goshawk	R	Y
<i>Accipiter striatus</i>	Sharp-shinned Hawk	O	N
<i>Aegolis acadicus</i>	Northern Saw-whet Owl	O	N
<i>Agelaius phoeniceus</i>	Red-winged Blackbird	O	N
<i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>	Golden Eagle	O	N
<i>Asio flammeus</i>	Short-eared Owl	O	Y

SCIENTIFIC NAME	COMMON NAME	ABUNDANCE	OBSERVED
<i>Asio otus</i>	Long-eared Owl	U	N
<i>Bombycilla garrulus</i>	Bomhemian Waxwing	O	N
<i>Bonasa umbellus</i>	Ruffed Grouse	C	Y
<i>Bubo virginianus</i>	Great Horned Owl	C	Y
<i>Buteo jamaicensis</i>	Red-tailed Hawk	C	Y
<i>Buteo lagopus</i>	Rough-legged Hawk	C	Y
<i>Buteo regalis</i>	Ferruginous Hawk	U	N
<i>Buteo swainsoni</i>	Swainson's Hawk	U	Y
<i>Calamospiza melanocorys</i>	Lark Bunting	U	Y
<i>Calcarius lapponicus</i>	Lapland Longspur	U	N
<i>Calcarius mccownii</i>	McCown's Longspur	O	Y
<i>Carduelis flammea</i>	Common Redpoll	U	N
<i>Carduelis hornemanni</i>	Hoary Redpoll	U	N
<i>Carduelis pinus</i>	Pine Siskin	C	Y
<i>Carduelis tristis</i>	American Goldfinch	C	Y
<i>Carpodacus cassinii</i>	Cassin's Finch	R	N
<i>Cathartes aura</i>	Turkey Vulture	O	Y
<i>Catharus fuscescens</i>	Veery	C	N
<i>Catharus guttatus</i>	Hermit Thrush	C	Y
<i>Catharus ustulatus</i>	Swainson's Thrush	C	Y
<i>Certhia americana</i>	Brown Creeper	C	N
<i>Charadrius vociferus</i>	Killdeer	C	Y
<i>Chondestes grammacus</i>	Lark Sparrow	U	N
<i>Chordeiles minor</i>	Common Nighthawk	C	Y
<i>Circus cyaneus</i>	Northern Harrier	U	Y
<i>Coccothraustes vespertinus</i>	Evening Grosbeak	C	N
<i>Colaptes auatus</i>	Norther Flicker	U	Y
<i>Columba livia</i>	Rock Dove	O	Y
<i>Corvus brachyrhynchos</i>	American Crow	C	Y
<i>Corvus corax</i>	Common Raven	C	Y
<i>Cyanocitta stelleri</i>	Steller's Jay	C	Y
<i>Dendragapus obscurus</i>	Blue Grouse	C	Y
<i>Dendroica coronata</i>	Yellow-rumped Warbler	C	Y
<i>Dolichonyx oryzivorus</i>	Bobolink	U	N
<i>Eremophila alpestris</i>	Horned Lark	O	Y
<i>Euphagus cyanocephalus</i>	Brewer's Blackbird	C	Y
<i>Falco columbarius</i>	Merlin	R	N
<i>Falco mexicanus</i>	Prairie Falcon	R	N
<i>Falco sparverius</i>	American Kestrel	C	Y
<i>Gymnorhinus cyanocephalus</i>	Pinyon Jay	U	N
<i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i>	Bald Eagle	O	Y
<i>Junco hyemalis</i>	Dark-eyed Junco	C	Y
<i>Lanius excubitor</i>	Northern Shrike	O	N
<i>Lanius ludovicianus</i>	Loggerhead Shrike	U	N
<i>Leucosticte arctoa</i>	Rosy Finch	O	N
<i>Loxia curvirostra</i>	Red Crossbill	O	N
<i>Melanerpes lewis</i>	Lewis' Woodpecker	R	N
<i>Melospiza lincolni</i>	Lincoln's Sparrow	U	N

SCIENTIFIC NAME	COMMON NAME	ABUNDANCE	OBSERVED
<i>Molothrus ater</i>	Brown-headed Cowbird	C	Y
<i>Myadestes townsendi</i>	Townsend's Solitaire	C	Y
<i>Nucifraga columbiana</i>	Clark's Nutcracker	C	Y
<i>Numenius americanus</i>	Long-billed Curlew	C	Y
<i>Parus atricapillus</i>	Black-capped Chickadee	C	Y
<i>Parus gambeli</i>	Mountain Chickadee	C	Y
<i>Passer domesticus</i>	House Sparrow	C	Y
<i>Passerculus sandwichensis</i>	Savannah Sparrow	C	N
<i>Passerina amoena</i>	Lazuli Bunting	O	N
<i>Perdix perdix</i>	Gray Partridge	O	Y
<i>Perisoreus canadensis</i>	Gray Jay	C	Y
<i>Pica pica</i>	Black-billed Magpie	O	Y
<i>Picoides pubescens</i>	Downy Woodpecker	O	Y
<i>Picoides villosus</i>	Hairy Woodpecker	O	Y
<i>Pinicola enucleator</i>	Pine Grosbeak	O	Y
<i>Pipilo maculatus</i>	Spotted Towhee	U	N
<i>Piranga ludoviciana</i>	Western Tanager	O	N
<i>Plectrophenax nivalis</i>	Snow Bunting	U	N
<i>Poocetes gramineus</i>	Vesper Sparrow	U	N
<i>Salpinctes obsoletus</i>	Rock Wren	O	N
<i>Selasphorus rufus</i>	Rufous Hummingbird	O	Y
<i>Sialia currucoides</i>	Mountain Bluebird	C	Y
<i>Sitta canadensis</i>	Red-breasted Nuthatch	O	N
<i>Spizella arborea</i>	American Tree Sparrow	U	N
<i>Spizella breweri</i>	Brewer's Sparrow	U	N
<i>Spizella pallida</i>	Clay-colored Sparrow	U	N
<i>Spizella passerina</i>	Chipping Sparrow	O	Y
<i>Sturnella neglecta</i>	Western Meadowlark	C	Y
<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	European Starling	O	N
<i>Tachycineta bicolor</i>	Tree Swallow	C	Y
<i>Troglodytes aedon</i>	House Wren	U	N
<i>Turdus migratorius</i>	American Robin	C	Y
<i>Tympanuchus phasianellus</i>	Sharp-tailed Grouse	U	N
<i>Tyrannus tyrannus</i>	Eastern Kingbird	U	N
<i>Tyrannus verticalis</i>	Western Kingbird	U	N
<i>Zenaida macroura</i>	Mourning Dove	O	Y
<i>Zonotrichia leucophrys</i>	White-crowned Sparrow	U	N

**HAHN RANCH
CONSERVATION EASEMENT
MANAGEMENT PLAN**

MONTANA FISH, WILDLIFE & PARKS

I. INTRODUCTION

The Hahn Ranch Conservation Easement is on approximately 1,685 acres of property located approximately 15 air miles southeast of Helena along the east slopes of the Elkhorn Mountains (Figure 1). The property occurs in deer and elk hunting district 380 and is generally bordered by Helena National Forest to the west, Headwaters Resource Area (Bureau of Land Management) land to the east, and other private lands on the north and south.

Vegetation communities consist of riparian areas, intermountain grasslands, shrub-grasslands and forested mountain foothills. Drainages on the property include Whitehorse Creek, Kimber Gulch, and Kelly Gulch.

Presently, the main use of the Hahn Ranch is cattle grazing utilizing primarily a deferred grazing system. Grazing occurs during spring through fall with cattle from the Hahn Ranch.

The Hahn Ranch winters a significant number of elk, a limited number of mule deer and whitetail deer, and has been used on a limited basis by recently transplanted bighorn sheep. The property is a popular hunting area with public access via the Kimber Gulch road which accesses BLM land and Forest Service land by going through Hahn Ranch property.

The primary reasons in acquiring a conservation easement on the Hahn Ranch are to protect important wildlife habitats from residential subdivision and related development while at the same time allowing for a continued ranching operation and public recreational access. An easement with MFWP will serve to protect and/or enhance habitat quality so as to provide for the needs of wildlife and agriculture in perpetuity.

Funds used for acquiring this easement would come from hunting license revenues earmarked by House Bill 526 for the Habitat Montana Program.

A major aspect of this conservation easement and subsequent grazing management will be the implementation of a rest-rotation grazing system (see Attachment A of the Management Plan for details). The Hahn Ranch is the permittee on the adjacent BLM Kimber Gulch Allotment and the Forest Service Diorite Allotment. These public lands have been grazed in conjunction with the Hahn Ranch property. The proposed grazing system was developed jointly by MFWP, Hahn Ranch, BLM, and the Forest Service. The system will require a total of approximately \$46,875 for all improvements on public and private lands to implement and will be fully implemented over a 3 year period. Improvements will include additional fencing, installing a well, and a water tank and pipeline. Improvements on Hahn ranch property will be funded through MFWP's Habitat Montana program and jointly funded on public lands by MFWP, BLM, and the Forest Service or through other sources of funding. The system was developed to take advantage of BLM lands not currently functional for grazing, to manage grazing around an occasional locoweed problem in some pastures, to provide better utilization of forage, and to provide adequate rest from grazing to the vegetation.

This management plan was written to describe various management actions which will occur as a result of a conservation easement with the Hahn Ranch. In this plan, specific objectives are identified which will achieve the overall stated goal of this easement. Issues in relation to each objective are identified and strategies to address these issues are presented. This Management Plan will be updated as necessary by consent of the Landowners and MFWP.

II. GOAL

The overall management goal and purpose of the Hahn Ranch Conservation Easement is to:

Conserve and protect in perpetuity the wildlife habitat and agricultural values of the Hahn Ranch while maintaining public hunting opportunities as a recreation and management tool.

OBJECTIVES

Objective 1: Protect the productivity of soils, water and vegetation in a manner which will mutually benefit livestock grazing and wildlife.

Issue The distribution of habitat types and vegetation baseline information for the Hahn Ranch Conservation Easement property needs to be collected.

Strategy Develop a Baseline Inventory (as described in the statewide habitat plan) which will provide a basis for evaluating present habitat condition. This would involve quantifying and mapping vegetation cover types, and depicting unique features which occur on the property.

Strategy In consultation with the MFWP vegetation ecologist, monitor vegetation and habitat condition over time by establishing permanent photo plots and/or photo points and vegetation transects in each vegetation community (revisited on a 3 to 5 year schedule). Aerial and ground photographs may also be used for monitoring changes in vegetation over time.

Issue Livestock grazing will be conducted in a manner that will protect and maintain the basic soil and vegetation resource, while leaving adequate forage for wildlife populations existing on the property at the time of Easement purchase by MFWP.

Strategy Implement a grazing plan consisting of a rest-rotation system with pastures on the private, BLM, and Forest Service land. Adequate annual rest in a portion of the overall system will insure the productivity of the soil and vegetation resource will be maintained. The rested pastures will provide sufficient forage for wildlife utilizing this area.

Strategy Through the use of transects as noted above, monitor the trend in vegetation and soil condition. Work with the landowner to adjust the grazing system if monitoring indicates a downward trend in range condition attributed to livestock or livestock use.

Issue The Hahn Ranch Conservation Easement contains limited amount of classified forested land but what occurs provides important thermal and hiding cover for wildlife. The goal is to manage the timber in a manner that will maintain this value in perpetuity.

Strategy The removal of timber (live or dead) by any means is prohibited.

Issue Other activities (aside from grazing and logging listed above) could potentially affect the values of soil, water and vegetation.

Strategy Cultivation is only allowed for the purpose of improving and replanting a previously cultivated area on approximately 160 acres in Section 5, T7N, R1E for the sole purpose of grazing.

Issue The terms of the conservation easement will require coordination with the landowner.

Strategy MFWP will meet annually or more frequently to discuss any concerns with the easement, needs for any adjustments, results of monitoring, etc. The goal will be to maintain a good working relationship between the landowner and the department.

Objective 2: Provide traditional recreational access onto the property for hunting.

Issue The present landowners allow hunting opportunities on the property. The goal is to maintain this existing use.

Strategy The public may hunt game animals and game birds of all sex and age classes during all hunting seasons, subject to regulations adopted by the state of Montana. The landowner must allow a minimum of 400 hunter days of recreation annually.

Strategy The Department may establish public parking areas (a total of 2) for motor vehicles in the Kimber and Kelly Gulch areas for the purpose of accommodating public hunting access to the private and adjacent federal land.

Strategy Block Management has been successfully implemented for the past 2 years and provides the framework for the hunter access portion of the easement. Hunter distribution, documenting hunter use, parking area designation, assisting with enforcement, etc. are all a part of the hunter access portion of the management plan.

Issue The public needs to be treated equally in the use of the Conservation Easement property.

Strategy The Landowner, Landowner's immediate family, Landowner's shareholders, partners, or employees or immediate family of shareholders, partners and employees of the Landowner shall not count towards satisfying the minimum number of hunters allowed on the Land.

Issue The Landowner may incur management problems and impacts related to public access.

Strategy Provide assistance to the landowner upon request to alleviate possible problems with managing public access (e.g. providing signs, continued participation in the Block Management program, etc).

Strategy Limit public vehicle access to the existing open roads to reduce cross-country travel, the spreading of noxious weeds, road damage and provide additional security for wildlife.

Strategy The landowners at their discretion may allow hunters to use designated private ranch roads for access by motor vehicle or livestock for the retrieval of game, as long as this privilege does not violate the provisions of any standing Block Management or hunting management agreement.

Strategy The Landowner and or Department may deny the public access at any time for just cause such as disorderly conduct, intoxication, safety concerns, or other reasons as identified in the Conservation Easement or terms, rules, regulations and statutes of the Block Management Program.

Issue Recreational use of Hahn Ranch needs to be monitored to verify landowner compliance with access requirements.

Strategy MFWP will periodically patrol the Hahn Ranch over the course of the hunting season to evaluate compliance with access, use of designated roads, road sign maintenance, hunter numbers and other features of the program.

Objective 3: Maintain and/or improve the wildlife values which exist on the Hahn Ranch Conservation Easement property.

Issue Maintain existing wildlife habitat.

Strategy Document and map sagebrush and conifer communities in the Baseline Study that can be monitored over time in order to detect changes in distribution and abundance.

Issue There is a potential for game damage to occur on the Hahn Ranch and adjacent properties.

Strategy On the Hahn Ranch and adjacent properties, game damage problems will be managed through public hunting whenever possible during general season framework. Game damage materials will be provided on an as needed basis to adjacent landowners who allow public hunting in compliance with Department game damage statutes, rules, guidelines or policies.

Strategy The elk population will be managed within the framework of the Elk Management Plan (EMU) and not allowed to exceed the stated objective. Present elk numbers in the EMU are at objective and will be kept within those numbers with the use of hunter harvest.

Issue Human activities (particularly vehicular) during the winter can displace big game to their detriment.

Strategy MFWP discourages unnecessary human activities which disturb wintering big game.

Issue There may be habitat enhancement opportunities for upland game birds which are not addressed in the easement.

Strategy MFWP will review the ranch's potential for habitat enhancements and pursue habitat projects which are of interest to the landowner and meet habitat program objectives.

Issue Sagebrush provides winter forage for big game (particularly mule deer), birthing and hiding cover for game animals and other wildlife species.

Strategy The control or manipulation of sagebrush by any means is prohibited.

Issue The Hahn Ranch Conservation Easement property can at times winter 400 to 500 elk. The availability of adequate winter forage for elk is important.

Strategy Implement the proposed grazing plan which incorporates rested pastures that will provide adequate winter forage for wintering animals on an annual basis.

Strategy Work with the Hahn Ranch and if necessary adjust any grazing practices that might be significantly affecting the availability of winter forage for the allowable number of elk using the property.

ATTACHMENT A

PROPOSED GRAZING PLAN HAHN RANCH CONSERVATION EASEMENT

Following is the proposed grazing plan for the Hahn easement. The plan was developed with assistance from the Headwaters Resource Area (Bureau of Land Management), Forest Service, and Hahn Ranch. Land ownership of the various pastures is depicted in Figure 3. It should be noted that none of the easement terms apply to the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Lands. The grazing plan and proposed improvements will require additional NEPA documentation and a decision by BLM to incorporate the provisions of the plan as stated below into a BLM grazing permit.

Grazing System:

A six-pasture rest-rotation grazing system will be implemented. The grazing season will start about mid May each year. Annually, cattle will be moved into the appropriate A series, lower elevation, pasture in mid May. In June, a second pasture will be available for livestock grazing. At seed ripe time (approximately August 1) two additional pastures are available for grazing until the end of the grazing season. The remaining two pastures are rested from livestock grazing for the entire grazing season. Each year the grazing season begins with cattle using the previous years lower elevation rest pasture. Those two pastures grazed during the growing season the previous year are available for grazing after seed ripe the next year. These two pastures are then rested from livestock grazing the next year. For details refer to the attached grazing rotation schedule (Table 1) and associated map (Figure 4) illustrating the pasture layout. The grazing system will be fully implemented in the year 2000.

Table 1. Livestock grazing rotation for the Hahn Ranch Conservation Easement.

YEAR	PASTURE 1	PASTURE 1A	PASTURE 2	PASTURE 2A	PASTURE 3	PASTURE 3A
2000	REST	REST	A	A'	B	B
2001	A	A'	B	B	REST	REST
2002	B	B	REST	REST	A	A'
2003	REST	REST	A	A'	B	B
2004	A	A'	B	B	REST	REST
2005	B	B	REST	REST	A	A'

LAND OWNERSHIP HAHN EASEMENT

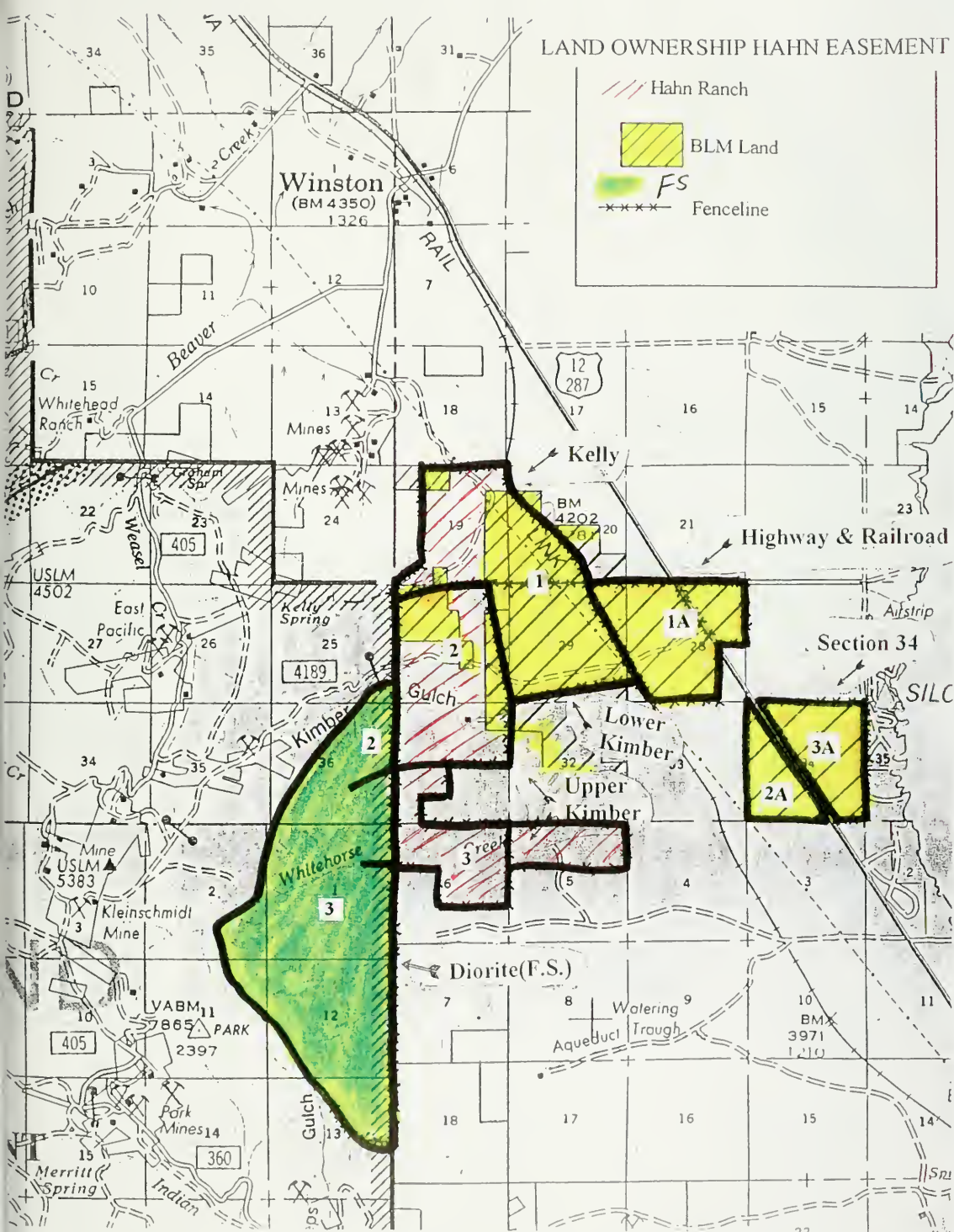


Figure 3. Land ownership of the various pastures in the proposed grazing system.

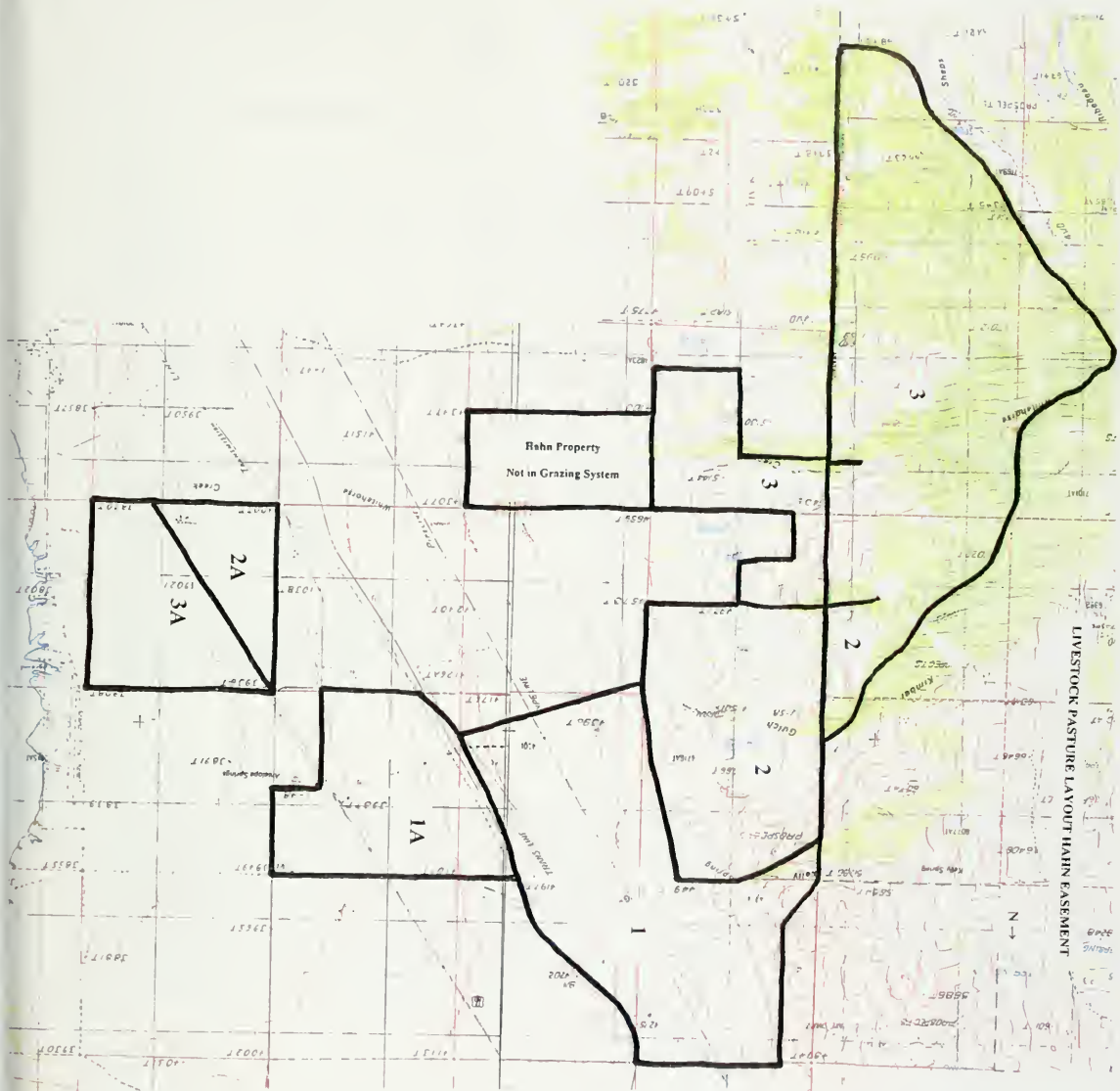


Figure 4. Pasture layout for the proposed grazing system (see Table 1 for grazing rotation).

Grazing Season Explanation

A' = Livestock grazing from mid May to at least June 15. Cows can stay later if landowner desires.

A = Livestock grazing from June or later until August 1 or seed ripe on bluebunch wheatgrass.

B = Livestock grazing from August 1 or seed ripe on bluebunch wheatgrass until the end of grazing season.

REST = Rested from livestock grazing for the entire grazing season.

Cows go on to the A' pasture in mid May and remain there until at least mid-June, if there is adequate forage for livestock the cattle should be left in the A' pasture as long as possible.

The intent is that the livestock operator would move cows from an upper pasture receiving the B treatment to a lower pasture receiving the B treatment to finish out the grazing season in the fall prior to going to the winter area. However if necessary the stockman can use either pasture scheduled for the B treatment any time after seed ripe on bluebunch wheatgrass during a particular grazing season.

Forest Service lands in Pastures 2 and three are free of loco weed and are fenced from the rest of their respective pastures. In years when Pasture 1 and 1A are scheduled for early or growing season grazing aerial spraying to kill loco weed may be necessary. Spraying will be necessary in years when locoweed is present in moderate or high density.

Stocking Rate

Stocking rate is to be determined by the landowner on his deeded ownership. Compliance with the grazing system and changes in vegetation are the aspects that will be monitored by MFWP. The grazing system includes substantial acreages of BLM and Forest Service lands. Stocking rate on Federal lands is as authorized by the Forest Service in the current Kimber/Diorite C & H Allotment Management Plan, Townsend Ranger District, Helena National Forest and by the BLM in the Headwaters Resource Management Plan (1984). This plan was developed cooperatively between the Forest Service and BLM.

Loco Weed

At times locoweed is a problem in some of the pastures. The pasture layout and rotation schedule is designed to give the landowner as much flexibility as possible in dealing with periodic locoweed problems. The landowner, at his discretion, may periodically spray his land to control locoweed

Range Improvements

Several range improvements are necessary to fully implement this grazing plan. These improvements include additional fencing on Hahn Ranch property, 2 drift fences and a water tank and pipeline on Forest Service land, and additional fencing, a well, and water tanks and pipelines on BLM lands (Table 2). BLM and Forest Service improvements will be funded using Sikes Act funds. Improvements on the Hahn Ranch will be funded by MFWP as part of the easement. MFWP will take the lead in working with the Forest Service and BLM to develop Sikes Act project proposals for the next proposal period (September, 1998). The goal is to obtain funding this fall for all the required improvements. Contracts will be let to have improvements installed during the summer of 1999. However, the Sikes Act proposal will allow for completion of the improvements during the summer of 2000 should it not be feasible to finish everything during the 1999 field season.

Table 2. Range improvements necessary for the Hahn Easement Grazing System and projected costs.

Improvement	FS/MFWP Cost Share	BLM/MFWP Cost Share	MFWP/Hahn
Fence	\$1,500	\$22,000	\$6,875
Well	0	\$5,000	0
Water Tank/Pipeline	\$4,500	\$7,500	0
Totals	\$6,000	\$34,000	\$6,875

HAHN RANCH
CONSERVATION EASEMENT
SOCIO-ECONOMIC ASSESSMENT

MONTANA FISH, WILDLIFE AND PARKS

Prepared by:
Rob Brooks
4/2/1998

I. INTRODUCTION

House Bill 526, passed by the 1987 Legislature (MCA 87-1-241 and MCA 87-1-242), authorizes Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (MFWP) to acquire an interest in land for the purpose of protecting and improving wildlife habitat. These acquisitions can be through fee title, conservation easements, or leasing. In 1989, the Montana legislature passed House Bill 720 requiring that a socioeconomic assessment be completed when wildlife habitat is acquired using HB 526 monies. These assessments evaluate the significant social and economic impacts of the purchase on local governments, employment, schools, and impacts on local businesses.

This socioeconomic evaluation addresses the purchase of a conservation easement on property presently owned by the Hahn Ranch. The report addresses the physical and institutional setting as well as the social and economic impacts associated with the proposed conservation easement.

II. PHYSICAL AND INSTITUTIONAL SETTING

A. Property Description

The Hahn Ranch is located about 15 air miles southeast of Helena, Mt. along the east side of the Elkhorn Mt. and west of Highway 287. A detailed description of the property is included in the environmental assessment (EA) on page 1. This easement encompasses 1,685 acres of the ranch.

B. Habitat and Wildlife Populations

This property provides habitat for elk, deer, antelope, and upland game birds along with a variety of nongame wildlife. The property in conjunction with adjacent public lands supports 400-500 elk during the winter months and supports 50-100 antelope year round. A complete list of wildlife that would benefit by preserving the habitat is included in Appendix A.

C. Current Use

The Hahn Ranch is a family operated cattle operation. The Hahn Ranch has allowed public access to Forest Service land adjacent to their property and have allowed public hunting on their land.

D. Management Alternatives

- 1) Purchase a conservation easement on the property by MFWP
- 2) No purchase

Alternative 1, the purchase of a conservation easement will provide long term protection for the ranching activities this land supports as well as allow for the protection and enhancement of the

native habitats and wildlife this land sustains. In addition the easement will provide for public access on the property for hunting and maintain public access through the property to adjacent public land.

The second alternative, the no purchase option, does not guarantee the protection of these resources from future development or provide guaranteed public access.

MFWP Purchase of Conservation Easement

The intent of the Hahn conservation easement is to protect and enhance the wildlife habitat currently found on the property while maintaining the agricultural uses of the property. This easement would also help maintain the open space characteristics of the area. In addition, this easement will provide public access to the property and adjacent public land for hunting in perpetuity. The Deed of Conservation Easement specifies the terms of the agreement. The major points presented here may affect the socioeconomic environment. They are:

- 1) No residential subdivision or development except that allowed by the easement.
- 2) No commercial use of land and resources except those allowed by the Easement.
- 3) Game farming is prohibited.
- 4) No new buildings or construction except that allowed by the Easement.
- 5) Mining restricted
- 6) No cultivation except for 160 acres for sole purpose of grazing.

A complete list of the restrictions this easement has on the landowners is provided in the Deed of Conservation Easement.

No Purchase Alternative

This alternative requires some assumptions since management of the property will vary depending on what the current owners decide to do with the property if MFWP does not purchase a conservation easement.

Subdivision of the land for homesites is a possibility. Lands in the immediate area have been developed with plans to subdivide land next to the Hahn Ranch. In addition, commercial uses, such as fee hunting, of the land are also a possibility. Public access to this property would not be guaranteed without an easement and access to Forest Service land via the Kimber Gulch Road, which is not public, would not be guaranteed. The economic impacts associated with this alternative have not been calculated.

III. SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC IMPACTS

Section II identified the management alternatives this report addresses. The purchase of a conservation easement will provide long term protection of important wildlife habitat, help to preserve the ranching characteristics of the area, keep the land in private ownership and provide for public access for hunting. Section III quantifies the social and economic consequences of the two management alternatives following two basic accounting stances: financial and local area impacts.

Financial impacts address the cost of the conservation easement to MFWP and discuss the impacts on tax revenues to local government agencies including school districts.

Expenditure data associated with the use of the property provides information for analyzing the impacts these expenditures have on local businesses (i.e. income and employment).

A. Financial Impacts

The financial impacts on MFWP are related to the purchase price of the conservation easement and maintenance/management costs. The Hahn Ranch conservation easement will cost MFWP \$250,000. Maintenance/management costs related to the easement are associated with monitoring the property to insure the easement terms are being followed. These costs are unknown at this time. In addition, \$6,875 of Habitat Montana monies will be used to add range improvements for the grazing system to be implemented on the Hahn Ranch.

The financial impacts to local governments are the potential changes in tax revenues resulting from the purchase of the conservation easement. The Hahn Ranch easement will leave the land in private ownership and will not change the type or level of use on the property - it will remain as a working ranch. There will be no significant changes in tax revenues to local governments including schools due to the easement. The number of cattle run on the properties will not decrease due to the easement.

B. Economic Impacts

The purchase of a conservation easement will not adversely affect the ranching activities on the Hahn ranch. Consequently there will not be any significant impacts to local businesses associated with the ranching activities.

IV. FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

As noted at the beginning of this document, the Hahn property is located in Broadwater County about 15 air miles southeast of Helena, MT.

This easement will provide protection for the habitat that elk utilize, especially for winter range, as well as a large variety of other wildlife. It will prevent residential subdivision of this land thereby protecting the open space characteristics of the area. In addition this easement will protect public access for hunting, both on the ranch and adjacent public lands.

The purchase of a conservation easement by MFWP will not cause a reduction in tax revenues to Broadwater County.

The agricultural/ranching operations will continue at their current levels.. The financial impacts of the easement on expenditures by the Hahn's on local businesses will be neutral to positive.

The purchase of a conservation easement on land owned by the Hahn Ranch appears to be in the public interest.

